



Town of Fairfax
Select Board Meeting
May 4, 2020 – 7:00pm

The drafted minutes presented below are unapproved subject to corrections and/or additions at the next Selectboard meeting. Those corrections and/or additions will be written to an amended version of the minutes, which will also be made available to the public.

Selectboard Members Present: Steve Cormier; Chair, Sheri Rainville; Vice-Chair, Stephen Bessette, Duane Leach & Randy DeVine

Public Present: John Caissy, Eric Kobelski, Nicole Hicks, Mitch Miller, Jill Decker, Catherin Dimitruk, Barb Murphy, Stephanie Lacayo, Ryan Ovitt, Brandon White, Paul Anderson, Robby Rodimer, Lorna Meunier, Robert Revoir, Anita Wilmette, Agnes Quinn, Christine Brown, Deb Picucci, Jay Shepard, Ryan Thatcher, Chelsea Clark, Charlotte Benoit, Owen Senesac

Employees Present: Brad Docheff (Town Manager), Debbie Woodward, Dave Raymond, Johanna Blake, Jesse Fleming

Call to Order: S. Cormier called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Announcements/Additions & Deletions: Two additions after GMP authorization

Minutes:

4-20-2020 S. Bessette made the motion to accept the minutes as written, seconded by Duane, all in favor.

Accounts Payable & Payroll Warrants:

4-27-2020 The Town and Utility warrants were reviewed by Sheri.

5-4-2020 The Town warrants were reviewed by Randy; Utility warrants were reviewed by Sheri.

Public Forum: None

Correspondence: VEDA Form #4A in relation to broadband expansion plan from MC Fiber. This form allows for MC Fiber to move forward with no undue cost to the community. Any work will be done in the Town's right of way and any lines would be put up on existing poles. Sheri made the motion to sign form 4A, seconded by S. Bessette, all in favor.

Discussion of proposed land lease of Town property on Fletcher Rd to Verizon

Wireless: Andrew Davis, Brian Sullivan and Louis Hodgetts;

S. Cormier started this conversation off with, the Town has not signed any agreements with Verizon. This will be our 3rd meeting, first we had a public hearing, then an agenda item concerning Verizon and now the 3rd meeting. At the end of the November meeting, the SB authorized the Town Manager to work with Verizon on an agreement, no other work has been done.

As a reminder, S. Bessette has recused himself from any discussion and vote concerning this matter.

Brian Sullivan stated now has never been a more important time to increase capacity of high-speed connection. Due to the COVID 19, more and more people and students are working from home.

The Fletcher Road site is the best possible location for the proposed tower. It is close in proximity to the school and downtown Fairfax. Other sites considered didn't meet the expectations. To make it clear, this is a 4G tower with no plans to become a 5G. The estimated RF (Radio Frequency) is only 24% of the FCC limits. Verizon Engineers project at worse case, over the years they have found the actual RF to be lower.

A new concern brought up by residents was, what If there was wind damage and a tree fell on the generator, what would happen if there was a diesel spill?

Verizon prefers a diesel generator over a propane. Diesel can be brought in, in tanks on the back of ATV's where propane would require a truck to fill and the access road would need to be plowed in the winter. At this site there is little chance of contamination into nearby areas. If any contamination were to exist, the slope of the land would keep the contamination on site.

The floor was now opened to the public for **Q**uestions and **C**omments.

Q. This is a broad band tower not a cell tower, making people think this will help their cell coverage. **A.** This tower will help with cell coverage, broad band, text and apps.

C. A resident asked the Selectboard to please consider residents viewpoints, health and property values before deciding.

Q. Has the board thought of a town wide vote? **A.** There has been no discussion with the SB yet, what direction is best to take. Per legal advisement, a vote would only be an advisory vote, the SB has full authority to make the decision.

Q. Does this tower fit with the Town Plan with the importance of nature and open spaces? What is the revenue the Town will make from Verizon? **A.** The site is proposed to be 100 x 100 sq. ft. plus improvements to the access road. The compound is proposed at 50 x 50, there will be very little impact to the town forest. Since this is still under negotiation, the SB is not releasing the proposed revenue.

C. Verizon is not being honest with us, and this is a horrible location. There is no need for the tower.

Q. What were the exact locations of other sites? **A.** The field behind Erica's, the Town Garage, the Water Tower as well as others.

Q. Are there developmental affects on small children? **A.** In the fall, Verizon submitted compiled information on this. Cell phones have been around for 25-30 years, by now we would have seen creditable evidence. Brian says to his knowledge, there is no creditable evidence.

C. There is a petition going around to stop the proposed land lease. If someone would like to sign the petition, they can email Stephane Lacayo at Stephanie.horn3@gmail.com. These studies Verizon speaks of, were industries funded, there are other studies that say otherwise.

Q. Will this only increase the cell coverage/band coverage for Verizon customers only? **A.** Initially yes, this will only benefit Verizon customers, but other carries may request to put antenna's on to boost their coverage.

C. Resident is in favor of this tower, lets keep businesses here in Fairfax and the favorable impact this will have on thousands of people not just the negative impact on a few people.

C. Cell service and internet service is not fine across all of Fairfax, coverage in North Fairfax is iffy at best.

Q. How do people vote on this? Where is information announced? **A.** The SB has the final say on this project. A decision could be made in the next month by the SB. Information on this is posted on the Town's website, Facebook page and Front Porch Forum.

C. Isn't our environment worth saving?

Other questions and comments were, why do we want to destroy our pristine area? What will happen to property values? Where are other propagation studies with numbers? Why would Verizon invest in a tower that will be outdated in a few years?

S. Cormier again stated that the SB has not signed any contracts or agreements, as the chair of the board, S. Cormier would like to see from Verizon the information on the other 5 sites that were mentioned for a possible location,

S. Cormier closed this discussion.

Authorization of Agreement with GMP for temporary attachments to utility poles: This authorization gives the Town the authority to hang temporary signage on utility poles. A parent of a High School Senior has asked about hanging pictures of the Seniors on the poles. This conversation continues with Brad. The board authorized Brad to sign this agreement.

Addition:

A Bill as introduced and passed by the Senate 2020, (This bill has not been signed by the Governor yet but is expected to be) This bill would give the right to Selectboards on how to collect property taxes and penalties. After discussion with the Town Clerk and Tax Collector, the SB will keep the May 14th due date for property taxes.

Illegal Burn: On April 25th the Fire Dept. was dispatched to Meade Road for an open burn. This was a burn without permit, fire dangers on this day were high and permits were not issued. Approximately 7 acres were burnt. "The fire extended from the property of origin to several neighboring properties" The fire was called in by an adjoining property owner. A civil Penalty and Invoice for response to Non-Permitted fire were discussed. Brad will discuss with Sheriff Langevin and VLCT for advice.

Town Manager:

- The Town has put in an application for a public "Hot Spot" for free WIFI. Most likely this will be at the Town Office if approved.
- Safety protocols for staff and town buildings: Documentation will be placed at the town office for social distancing, if you are in the "common areas" then mask must be worn. Employees were required to take OSHA training. We will open to the public when the time is right, our employee's safety is important, and we won't be rushed.
- We don't know what if any financial shortfalls may arise from the COVID-19, Union Bank is willing to work with the town if a Line of Credit adjustment is needed.
- The Library will be providing curb side service soon.
- Brad, Randy and Amy met with Engineers from Aldrich and Elliott for the Utility Ext. project. The Engineers and Randy continued with site visits. We are all set with grants to extend the closing date to Sept. 2021.

Other Business:

Adjournment:

At 9:50 S. Bessette made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Sheri, all in favor.

The minutes were respectfully submitted by Amy Sears; Administrative Assistant.

Steven Cormier
Selectboard Chair

** This meeting was held virtual through Zoom. Randy participated via phone.

** The recorded meeting is available through LCATV or the Town's website. **